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## Akin House: Powerpoint for Grant Proposal to Benefit Akin House Cultural Heritage Center

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# Waterfront Historic Area League WHALE

*in cooperation with*

The Town of Dartmouth

QuickTime™ and a  
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

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## Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Grant Proposal



*to  
benefit*

The Akin House Cultural Heritage Center



# The Elihu Akin House. South Dartmouth, Massachusetts

In 1761, Elihu Akin starts his shipbuilding business in Padanaram Village. At the foot of Prospect Street, on the waterfront, is the site of Akin's Wharf.

Elihu Akin owned a house on the corner of Prospect St. and what is now Water St. He also owned a tavern in the neighborhood.

In 1762 Jacob Russell, yeoman, sold eighteen acres of his land to Job Mosher, a house carpenter.

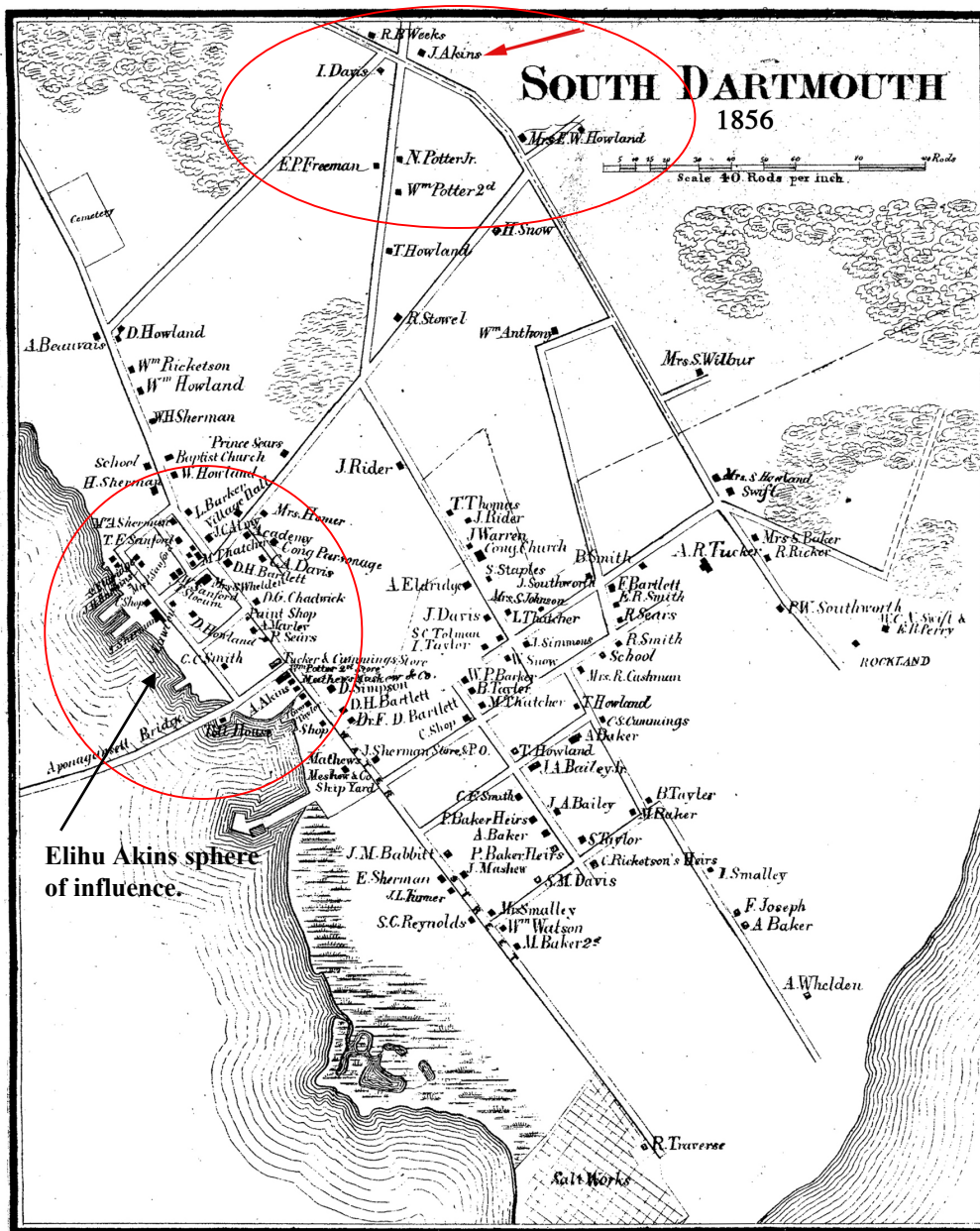
Five years later, in 1767, Job Mosher sold the eighteen acres to Jonathan Delano, Jr. In the deed, Job refers to the eighteen acres as "My homestead farm where I now dwell with all my buildings and fences."

In 1769, two years later, Jonathan Delano, Jr. had died at sea. His estate sold the property to Elihu Akin of Dartmouth, which became known as "Elihu's Second House." (top of map)

By 1856 Joseph Akin, grandson of Elihu Akin, owns and lives on the property.

In 1861, Joseph Akin, wills to his son Joseph Akin, Jr., "all of his homestead, consisting of dwelling house, out buildings, and thirteen acres of land."

This homestead farm remained in the Akin family until 2003 when WHALE rescued the house from the threat of demolition.



Source: Town of Dartmouth, Bristol County Mass. By H. F. Walling

## **The Elihu Akin House in 1905**

The two hundred and forty-four year old Akin House is an excellent example of the classic pre-Georgian Cape Cod building type. As a cultural resource, it is one of the few representative structures left of a local building tradition tied to the 17th and 18th century farming community of South Dartmouth.



Source: Henry B. Worth papers, courtesy of Old Dartmouth Historical Society, New Bedford Whaling Museum archives.



## **The Elihu Akin House in 2003**

The Akin house, vacant and abandoned for 20 years, was put up for sale. In 2003 WHALE recognizing its historical significance and cultural importance purchased the house site unseen.

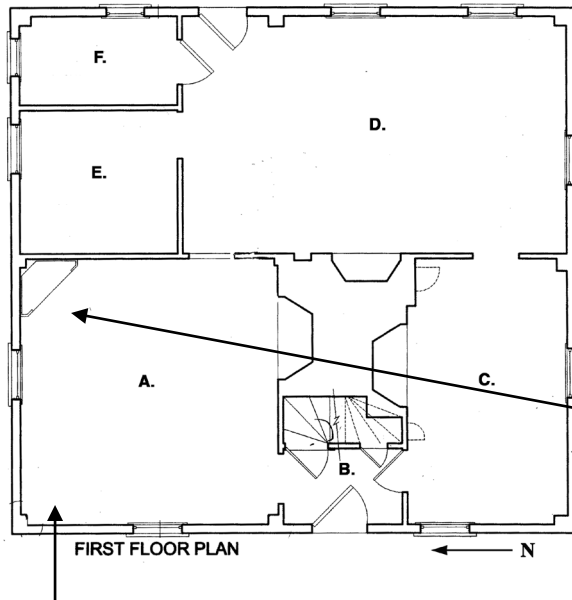


# WHALE's First Inspection



## Room A. Northwest Parlor

During the initial inspection, it was immediately evident that the north end of the house had suffered severe water damage.



The north half of the summer beam was rotted and broken as were the joists on the west side.

The ceiling boards were rotted and falling off.

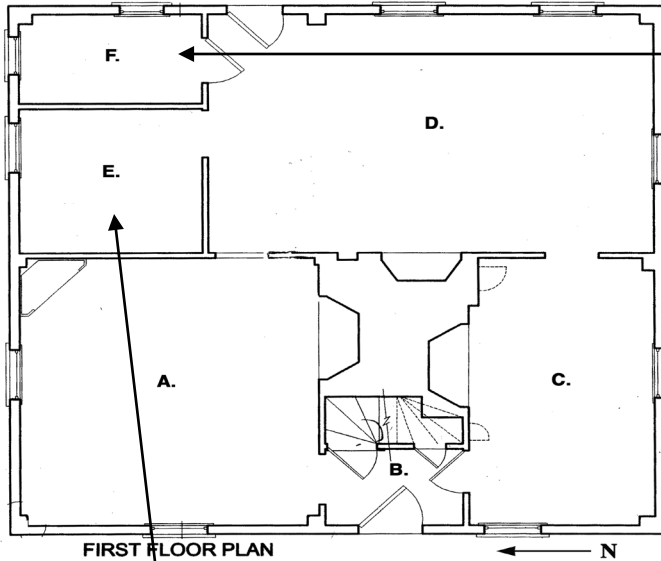
The rafter feet were rotted.

The north east plate was rotted and broken.





## Rooms E. and F. "Guest room and buttery"



Room F

Room F. was original a buttery. In the 20th century it became a bathroom.

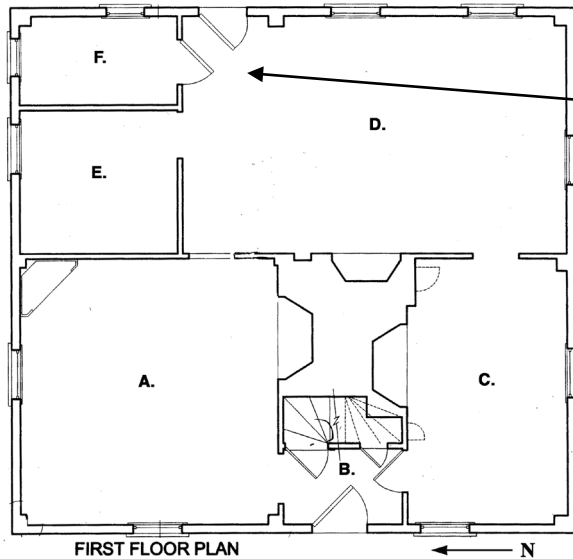
Extensive water damage had caused the partition wall, joists, girt, end girt, ceiling, between rooms E. and F. to collapse.

Room E





## Room D. Kitchen



The northeast corner of Room D and the entrance to Room F were in alarming condition.



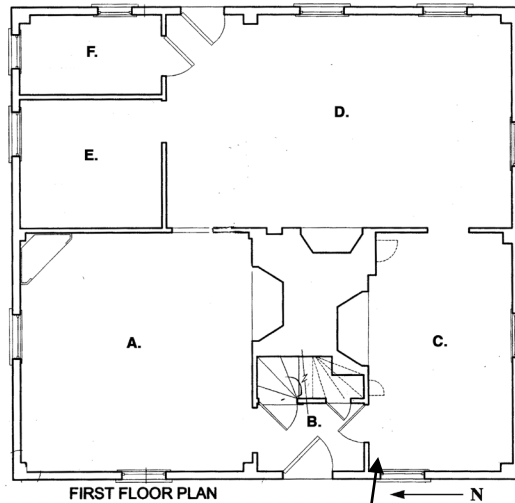
The water-damaged ceiling was also falling in.



By April 2004, the northeast corner wall had collapsed.



## Room C. Southwest Parlor

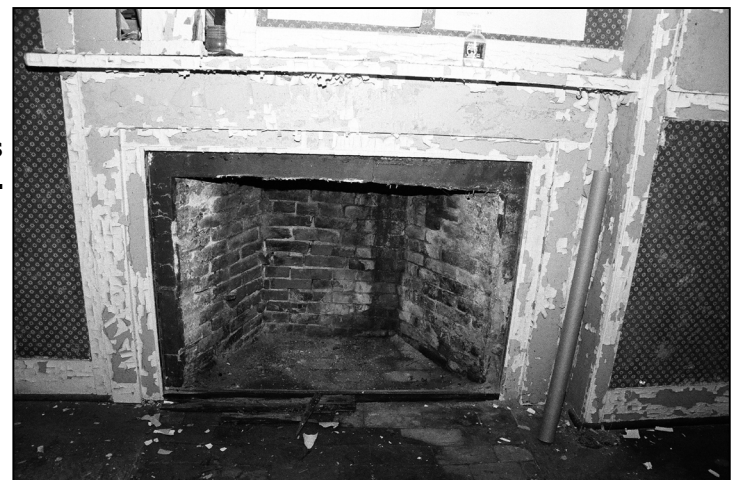


Except for lots of peeling paint, this corner of the house was not leaking and suffered little damage. One could actually jump on the floor without falling into the cellar.



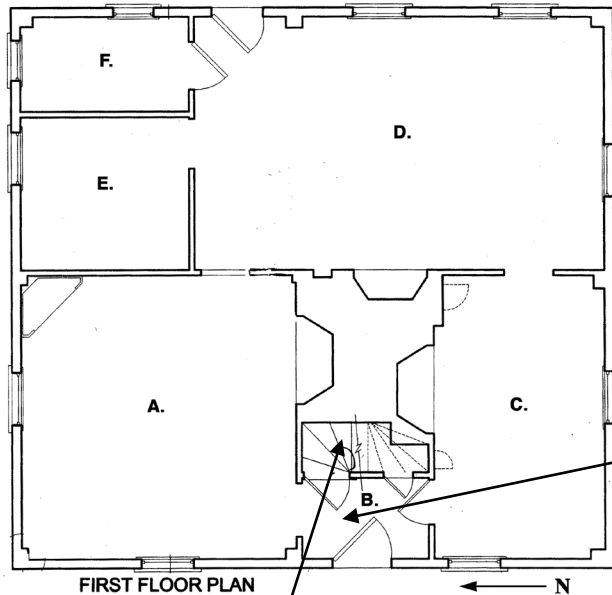
Walls are plastered with 4 layers of wallpaper.

The firebox has a Greek Revival surround.





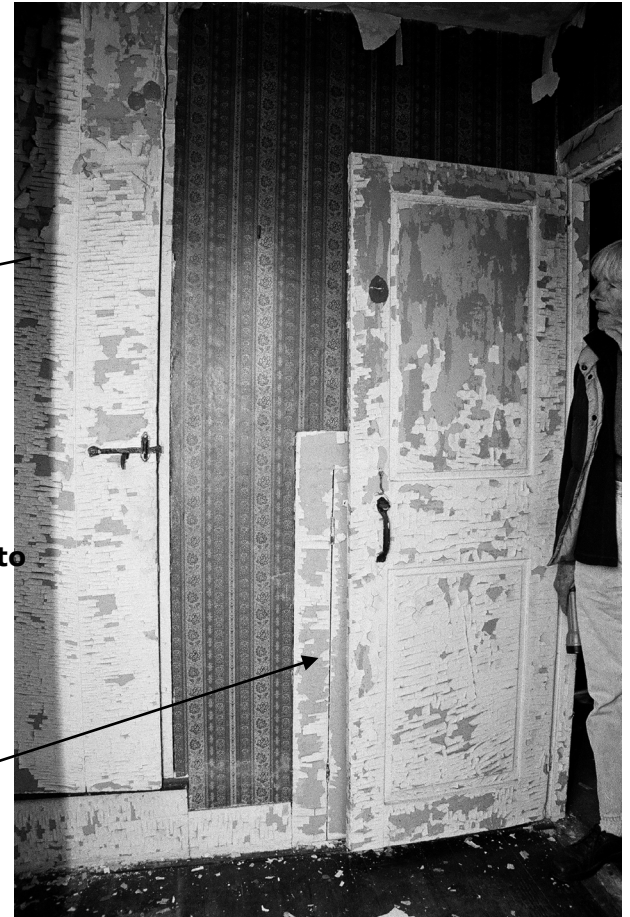
## Room B. Entry Hall



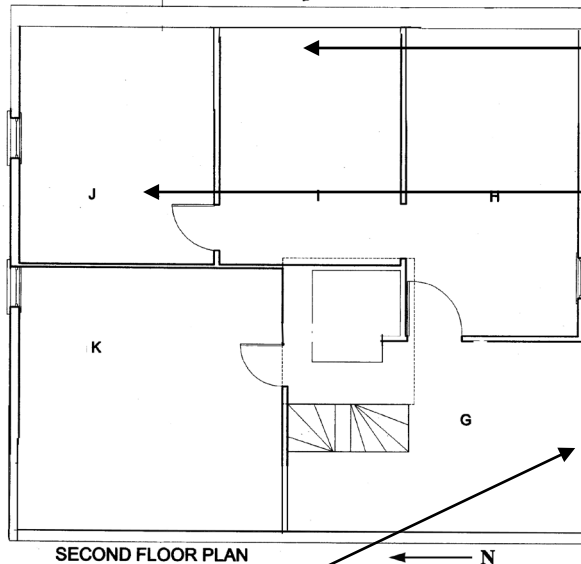
The narrow entry hall is structurally sound. The many layers of peeling paint on the woodwork range in color from white, ochre, gray-green and green-blue serving as a tangible timeline of the property's use over the centuries.

Behind the door is the stairway to the attic bedchambers. The stairway is constructed with cut nails suggesting the location of the stairway may be original to the house or a replacement.

Behind the door is a cup-board that leads to a small storage area where the back of Room C firebox can be seen.



## Second Floor. The Bedrooms and Hallway



**Room I:** Location of the 19th century dormer that due to poor construction had collapsed adding to the water damage.

**Room J—** Ruth's bequeath "*---and the use of the chamber over the guest room with the privilege of passing and repassing to and from the same.*"

**Room G.** Exposed chimney - west side, and top of stairway to attic.

The single plank partition boards dividing the four bedrooms are white washed.



**South wall.** Interior side of vertical plank sheathing—white washed with 19th century graffiti.

**Room K.** In the late 19th century the white-washed boards were plastered.



## The Cellar

The granite stones of the massive chimney foundation are cobbled outwards in order to carry the hearths for the fireplaces above. The foundation walls are granite field stones.



Southeast view of chimney foundation and root cellar



By the end of the first inspection, despite the water damage, WHALE concluded that this house was important to preserve and **could be** preserved.





## Preservation and Conservation.

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**Decisions** had to be made on how to preserve the Akin House so it could tell its two hundred and forty-four year old story: the structure, the Akin family, and their social and economic role in the history of Dartmouth and Southern New England.

**WHALE**, renowned for taking on projects that others deem impractical, impossible and hopeless, did what it does best—saved a significant piece of history from the wrecking ball.

**After assessing** the unique architectural features and structure of the Akin house, WHALE determined that a pure conservation approach was the best and highest use of this historically significant property.

**The Secretary of the Interior's Standards** for the treatment of Historic Properties offered a clear direction.

**Following** the approved final use of the property as a **cultural heritage center**, WHALE retained the services of the award-winning Architectural Preservation Group, Warwick, RI. Their work has exceeded the baseline standards outlined by the Secretary of the Interior Standards.

Note: The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation* are administered by the National Park Service.

# The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation

Source: The U.S. Department of the Interior Standards

***The existing condition** of historic features will be evaluated to determine the appropriate level of intervention needed. Where the severity of deterioration requires repair or limited replacement of a distinctive feature, the new material will match the old in composition, design, color, and texture.*

***Distinctive materials**, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.*

***The historic character** of a property will be retained and preserved. The replacement of intact or repairable historic materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.*

***Each property** will be recognized as a physical record of time, place, and use. Work needed to stabilize, consolidate, and conserve existing historic materials and features will be physically and visually compatible, identifiable upon close inspection, and properly documented for future research.*

***Changes to a property** that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.*

**Source: The Secretary of the Interior Standards**

[illegible]

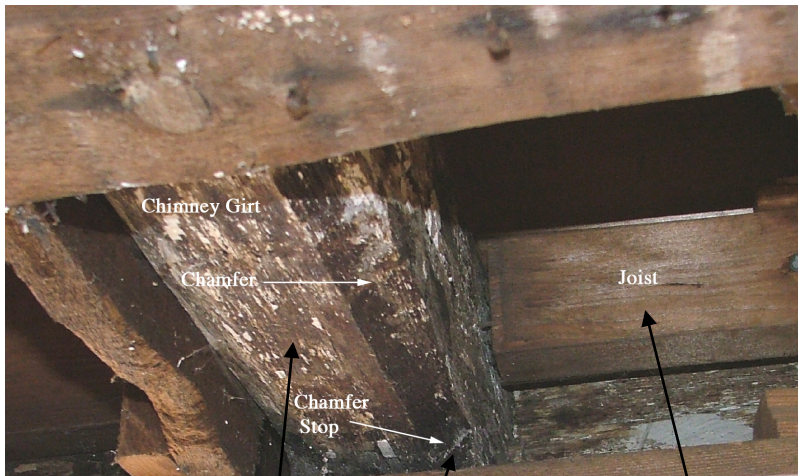
Architectural drawing of Building Section 'A' showing a cross-section of a house. The drawing includes the following labels and dimensions:

- Dimensions:**
  - Overall width: 25'-2 1/2"
  - Overall height: 10'-5 1/2"
  - Chimney height: 6'-8"
  - Room height: 7'-8"
  - Room width: 4'-3"
  - Room depth: 5'-0"
- Structural Elements:**
  - 3/4"x10" Pigs (Roof supports)
  - 5/8" Rafter @ ± 4'-0" o.c. (Rafters)
  - 2 3/4"x10" 7/8" Collar Ties (Collar ties)
  - 3"x4 1/2" Joists (Joists)
  - 3 7/8"x10 1/2" Joist (Joist)
  - Ø 1 1/2" w/c 1/2"x1" Summer (Summer)
  - Ø 1 1/2" Top Plate Corner Post (Corner post)
  - 7"x17 7/8" Girder #1 2"x6" Joists (Girder and joists)
- Rooms:**
  - N.E. Bedroom
  - N.W. Bedroom
  - Buttery
  - Bedroom
  - A Room North Parlor
- Notes:**
  - Unable to Determine Framing This Section of Basement

**BUILDING SECTION 'A'**

***"Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved."***

Source: The Secretary of the Interiors Standards



**Chimney girt is chamfered with lambs tongue stop.  
The joists are hand-planed and dressed.**



**The use of a summer beam goes back to the 17th century and earlier, but in this rural community this type of construction was still being used in 1762, although now hidden under a ceiling of wide ship-lapped pine boards suspended below the summer beam by hand made wooden holders.**

**Dovetail joinery**



**Originally whitewashed these 18 to 20 inch wide ceiling boards are rare and original to the structure.**



***"The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The existing condition of historic features will be evaluated to determine the appropriate level of intervention needed."***

Source: The Secretary of the Interior Standards



**Room D. Kitchen  
-East Wall-**  
In order to repair the sill and the plate the east wall was cut, removed, and stored and then reinstalled.



**Room A. Parlor  
-West Wall-**  
In order to repair the sill and plate, the sheathing was numbered, removed, stored and reinstalled.



Conservation work by the "Architectural Preservation Group." Warwick, RI



*"Where the severity of deterioration requires repair or limited replacement of a distinctive feature, the new material will match the old in composition, design, color, and texture."*

Source: The Secretary of the Interior Standards



All decayed pieces were saved and used as patterns for the new repairs.



New sills and joists were fashioned after the originals



Conservation work by the "Architectural Preservation Group." Warwick, RI



*"Historic materials and features will be physically and visually compatible"*

Source: The Secretary of the Interior Standards



The broken and decaying section of the summer beam was replaced with a new piece identical to

←the original→



The joists on the east side of the summer could be saved. The rotted joists and plate on the west side were replaced with identical material

The damaged bottoms of the vertical sheathing were repaired in place



Conservation work by the "Architectural Preservation Group." Warwick, RI



*"Each property will be recognized as a physical record of time, place, and use."*

Source: The Secretary of the Interior Standards



Room A

Behind the mid-20th century wall paneling were many layers of wallpaper attached to the original hand-planed and whitewashed interior boards. It was probably between these efforts to modernize that late 1800s Federal trim, Federal doors, beaded post casing and the corner cupboard were installed.



Earlier layers of wallpaper discovered behind the cupboard.

*"Each property will be recognized as a physical record of time, place, and use."*

Source: The Secretary of the Interior Standards



**Room E**

**From Elihu Akin's will of 1794:** *"I give and bequeath to my daughter Ruth, the use and improvement of the guest room in my dwelling house with the privilege of passing and repassing to the kitchen to the oven and well---and the use of the chamber over the guest room with the privilege of passing and repassing to and from the same."*

**By the 1930s, Ruth's room had become the new kitchen.**



**Room F**

**Marks of the buttery shelves before the room was changed to a bathroom.**

**By 2003 the sink, toilet, and bathtub had fallen into the cellar.**



***"Distinctive materials, features, that characterize a property will be preserved."***

Source: The Secretary of the Interiors



**Room A**

Whitewashed original ceiling boards and a section of the later 19th century plastered ceiling will be preserved.

Original joists and various replacements will be displayed under Plexiglass so that original construction details can be safely viewed.



**Room A**



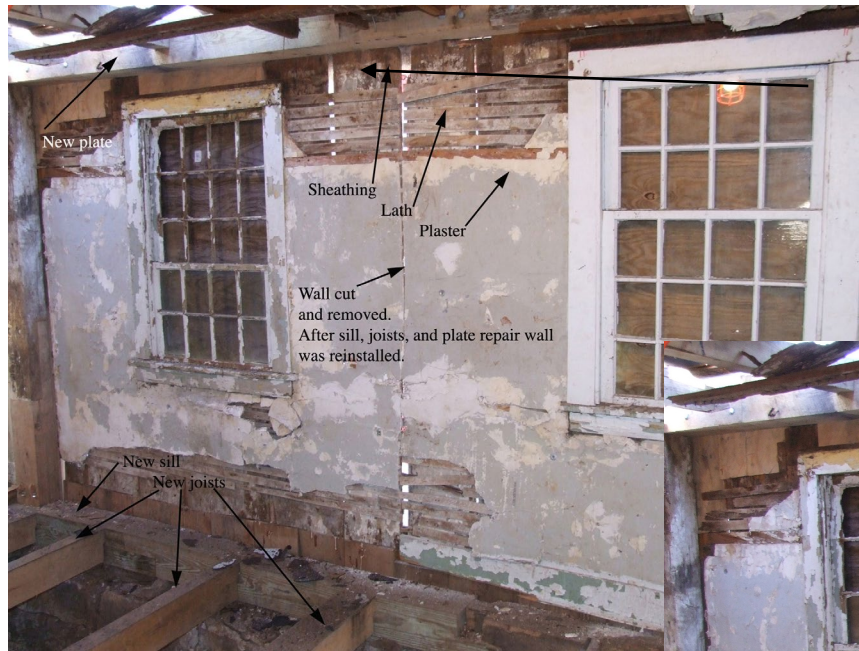
Samples of found artifacts that have ceased to be a necessity





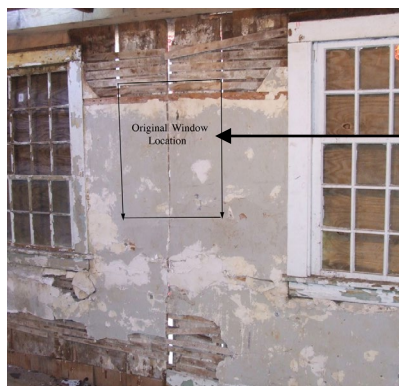
***"Each property will be recognized as a physical record of time, place, and use. Work needed to stabilize, consolidate, and conserve existing historic materials and features will be physically and visually compatible, identifiable upon close inspection, and properly documented for future research."***

Source: The Secretary of the Interior Standards



### **The east wall - Room D- the kitchen**

**1762.** The inside of the exterior sheathing was originally whitewashed with a single window. The ceiling joists and girt were whitewashed as were the ceiling boards. In the 19th century the single window was replaced by two large windows. Lath and plaster was applied to the walls and the ceiling.



**Location of single original kitchen window.**



***"Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved."***

Source: The Secretary of the Interior Standards

### **Exterior Exhibits**

**Impressions, nail holes, notches—that tell of an earlier time. Exhibits that will explain how to look for changes.**



**Clapboards followed by shingles.**

**To be under the Plexiglas:  
Explanation and display of both clapboards and shingles and the forensic marks they leave behind.**



**The location of an original window.**

**To be under the Plexiglas  
The display will show and explain how to recognize notches and shadow lines of an original window.**



***"Each property will be recognized as a record of time."***

Source: The Secretary of the Interior Standards

In 1921 the Akin House became a part of film history as a location for ***Down to the Sea in Ships***. The silent film classic clearly shows the condition of the Akin house in 1921.



**East View**

In this 1922 movie still, the 19th century dormer was still intact. Unfortunately when it was added a rafter was cut which caused it to gradually cave inward and contribute to the water damage.

Another frame from the film clearly shows a barn and an out-building at the north end of the house.

**The Akin house is described in the official program for the film's premiere on September 25, 1922.**

*"The Old Homestead – The house is more than two hundred years old, and the sag in the roof has been there for a century. During production, an elderly woman told Mr. Clifton of having played in the house when she was seven years old and in turn of hearing her grandmother tell of using the house for a play-ground at the age of seven."*



Photos courtesy of Old Dartmouth Historical Society, New Bedford Whaling Museum



# Akin House Cultural Heritage Center

A modest house transformed into a working classroom.  
*"Examples of characteristic displays"*

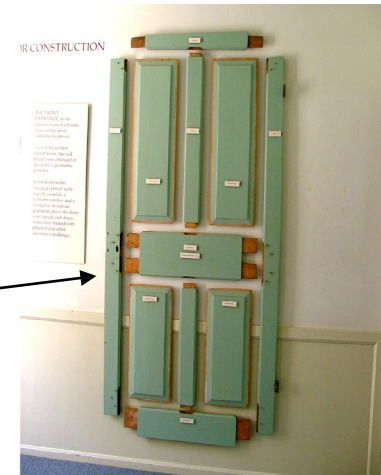
Source: The Secretary of the Interior Standards



## Exhibits.

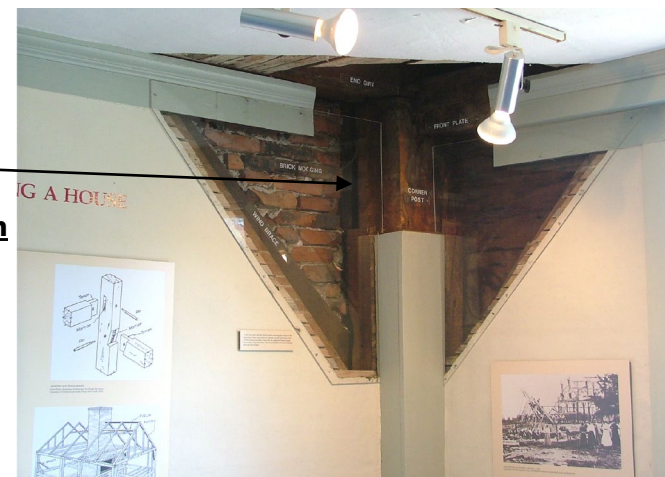
Original fabrics and signage.

Explanations of how parts were made.



Post and beam framing methods.

Wooden Lath  
Samples of what is behind the plaster..



Source: Strawberry Bank Museum. Portsmouth, N.H.

## **THE ELIHU AKIN HOUSE**

### **"A Little House with a big story to tell"**

From a forested landscape to Russell's Garrison for protection during King Philip's War.

From farming, fishing, and ship building to a village burned by the British, and kerosene lamps in middle-class kitchens—our vernacular architecture shapes everyday life.

Buildings, towns, and landscapes charged with cultural meaning that speak to both makers and users—their behavior, identity, ritual, and social changes.



## The Akin House -2006

WHALE's dedication is to make sure that what we touch today is not destroyed,  
but conserved for future historians.

